

We remained at anchor in Port Said of a month. Each two or three days a small steamer came alongside and loaded frozen meat for transportation to Army establishments elsewhere. Reasonable shore leave was granted but, as on other occasions, money was in short supply. Two or three of us, which in retrospect I now see with horror, swam in the harbour. Some times we swam to other ships at anchor nearby and exchanged "yarns" with equally bored and inactive crew members; some times we visited the city of Port Said and bought souvenirs and took the thick gravy-like coffee that was offered on street cafes; some times we strolled on the hot sands of Egypt and longed for the day when we would, once again, be at sea and reasonably occupied. This day finally came and with it several train loads of Australian soldiers for return to their homeland on leave. We were again in ballast which consisted of several hundreds of tons of Egypt's sand which had been lightered out to the ship and poured into our holds.

The run back through the Suez Canal was marred by a severe sand storm that lasted for several hours. Everything in the ship was coated with sand; it was in our beds, in our wireless gear and in our food but we were homeward bound.

As we passed Hell's Gate one evening after sunset and near Aden we saw an Australian hospital ship fully lighted and with the usual illuminated green band around the hull and red crosses on her sides. We were running in complete darkness which accentuated the bright lights of the hospital ship. We were told that the ship had stopped for a burial at sea.

During the run across from Aden to Colombo where we again coaled I was, as usual, one morning about 2 15am having tea and biscuits in the starboard cab of the Bridge with the 2nd Mate and with long leads on my headphones. The night was dark and overcast but the sea was smooth and there was little wind. The 2nd Mate and I, despite our differences in ages, (I at this time being about 18 years and he about 50,) had become talking partners. He told me of marine navigation and of his earlier life in sailing ships while I, with limited knowledge of the subject told him something of life in Australia which I discovered he liked very much and which he compared favorably with his native Wales. Suddenly the 2nd Mate, in the flash of an eye, dashed to the engineroom telegraph and ordered the starboard engine from full ahead to full astern and at the same time ~~ordered~~ ordered the helm hard over. For a moment I was completely oblivious to the reason for the commotion but I was not long left in doubt. As I glanced seaward I saw a black object slightly blacker than the night but with a patch of white at one end. Another ship, also travelling without lights, slid past us with but inches to spare. No other ship should have been within miles of that position and travelling on an opposing track to ours; opposite moving sea traffic were required to follow pre-determined and well-separated tracks. It was concluded, without evidence other than that which I have mentioned, that we luckily

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escaped

collision with an enemy raider. Within seconds the two ships had met, but without greeting, and passed on into the night. Of course the "old man" was advised immediately of the occurrence and soon appeared on the Bridge but all danger was now passed. That 2nd Mate certainly was keeping a strict lookout during that early morning watch. Credit would also be due to the Quartermaster who immediately answered the helm order and the Engineer below who so promptly answered his orders from the Bridge.

After short stops at Colombo, Fremantle (Perth) and Outer Harbour (Adelaide) we arrived back at Melbourne where I was instructed to report immediately to the responsible authority ashore. Fearing the worst and wondering very much why I was being summoned before the "big brass" I quickly greeted my mother and sister who were at the wharf and made my way to town. Very much to my surprise I was told that I had certain special qualifications that were being wasted at sea and could be put to better use ashore; would I agree to signing off the ship immediately. Although I could not lightly turn down an opportunity to transfer to a shore job, I was quite happy at sea and in any event I had been treated very well by the Captain of "Wiltshire" and felt I should give him an opportunity to advise me. Captain Hayward advised me to take the offered shore appointment but declined to clear me until the ship arrived in Sydney, and this was agreed. At this time my father was in charge of the lighthouse at Wilsons Promontory, the southernmost tip of Australia. My father and I both were well experienced in semaphore signalling and, by agreement with Captain Hayward I "yarned" to my father for almost two hours as we approached, passed, and travelled away from the Promontory. I did not have an opportunity to again see my mother before we left Melbourne for Sydney therefore my father, isolated as he was at the remote lighthouse, knew of my impending shore appointment ahead of the remainder of my family.

There was some misgivings in my mind that I was to leave the sea which life I had always craved for and which at one time I thought I might adopt on a permanent basis. Some of the other ship's officers were very outspoken in their beliefs that this was an opportunity that should not be missed at any cost; some were openly envious that I, still a youth, should be given such an opportunity.

Soon after passing Cliffy Island 20 miles on the Sydney side of Wilsons Promontory we ran into fog. During my time at sea we had experienced heat and cold, rain, sleet and, in the English Channel snow, fine weather and foul; green seas over the bow, and glassy surfaces, gales and calms but not until now on the last leg of my time at sea did I experience fog. We slowed down with the fog siren blaring at close intervals and "felt" our way along, past Cape Everard and onward towards Gabo Island. Giving Gabo a wide berth the ship was turned northward towards Sydney but it was not until this time, some 20 hours later that we ran out of the "pea souper" and into a starlit early morning.

As we approached Sydney Heads I packed my gear in readiness to

sign off the ship and, in the language of the sailor "swallow the anchor". My real regret at leaving the ship and the shipmates with whom I had gone through a few rather trying times was made worse by the kindly words spoken to me by the "Old Man" and by the written and unsolicited testimonial signed personally by himself that he gave to me. I looked back as a motor boat took me ashore from No.1 buoy where I had first sighted the old "Wiltshire" a couple of years earlier and wondered if I should see the ship again. I never did see her again but as will be seen later, and by a strange coincidence, I did communicate with the ship by radio.

H.M.A.T. A18 saw out what was left of the 1914-1918 war, carrying troops to war; carrying walking casualties back to Australia and carrying foodstuffs overseas to distant countries. Subsequent to the cessation of hostilities ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ H.M.A.T. A18 became again the T.S.S. "Wiltshire". She did not, however, have long to live. She ran ashore on Great Barrier Island outside the New Zealand's Auckland Harbour and became a total wreck, with Captain Hayward still in command and a few of the crew that I knew still in her. The total crew and one stowaway, after suffering considerable privations and after seeing the after portion of the ship break away and sink into deep water, were eventually taken ashore by means of the breeches-buoy type of lifesaving equipment.

Finally the fore-part of the ship was washed away and nothing but memories were left of the "Wiltshire" or of "A18". R.I.P.

My return by train to Melbourne, after the long voyages at sea, seemed dull by comparison. The home folk were glad to see me and I was glad to see them and to meet again relatives and friends that I had not seen for many months. I could not, however, shake off a feeling that I had deserted a good team, a happy ship, and a job of work that I seemed fitted to do. If, however, the authorities believed that there was something else that I could do better perhaps it was not for me to judge.

Soon after returning to Melbourne I reported to the Office and was advised that, had I not been delayed through the trip to Sydney, I was to have been drafted to a Coastal Radio Station at Esperance in Western Australia. However, as I was too late for that draft I was now, as soon as transportation could be arranged, to proceed to a similar station at Samarai in Papua. In the meantime I was to take up temporary duty at the Melbourne Coastal Radio Station after working off two weeks leave that was due to me.

During my first watch at Melbourne I "stood by" for familiarisation with the local equipment and shore procedures. On the second day of shore duty I was pronounced fit to take a solo watch which I commenced at 5pm and would continue until relieved at 11pm.

Although there was not strict wireless silence on the Australian ~~EEI~~ coast at that stage of the war, messages to and from ships at sea were, never-the-less kept to a minimum consistent with essential requirements.

Certain routine messages, in code, were transmitted at pre-arranged times and usually addressed to the collective callsign ABMV which represented "All British Merchant Vessels". These messages would be received by ships at sea but not acknowledged. Other routine transmissions included time signals which were used for precision checking of ship's chronometers for navigational purposes.

All was quiet. I was eating a meal of sandwiches and drinking thermos tea but still keeping a good watch as but recently required at sea. Somewhat relaxed I was thinking of ships at sea and in particular of "Wiltshire". Suddenly there was a call; I was receiving my first call from a ship at sea in my position of a Coastal Radio Station operator. I had no need to look in the large list of confidential callsigns to identify the ship that was calling me; of many strange things that could happen, this first call ~~from~~ from a ship at sea to me in my new shore position surely the strangest of all would be that the ship was "Wiltshire". It was truly "Wiltshire" then enroute from Sydney to parts unknown (to me) but which I reasonably assumed, and later confirmed, was to London and to home for many of the crew members that I knew.

Six weeks went by. There was no further advice regarding my move to Samarai; apparently I had been forgotten but this was not so. There had been, unknown to me, some difficulty in obtaining a passage for me on the small steamers that made 3-weekly visits to Papua. In due course I was advised to be ready to depart two days hence which meant hurried packing and good-bye visits to friends and relations. I could expect to be absent for three years or more.

continued:

I found the "Morinda", the steamer in which I was to travel to Papua, without difficulty in Sydney; she was tied up near Pyrmont Bridge and was already fully loaded with merchandise for delivery to Papua and New Guinea ports. In stalls, on deck, were a dozen cows which would be put over the side at Gilli Gilli in Milne Bay and swum ashore. Passengers had already begun to settle in on the ship when I arrived along side.

"Morinda" was not a large steamer. Indeed, a large steamer could not operate at some of the ports in Papua-New Guinea. At Woodland Island for example, there was barely sufficient clearance for the "Morinda", once she had entered the port, to be wharped ^{around} with her head to sea again. Passenger accommodation was mostly ~~below~~ ^{in the} main deck adjoining the dining saloon. It could almost be said that one could step out of bed alongside the dining table. At the forward end of the dining saloon three or four portholes opened on to the main deck where the cattle was quartered. There was a small lounge on the next deck above the saloon and a tiny library. These, and the rather cramped boat deck, did not cater particularly well for the passengers who would spend most of the next fortnight in the ship.

We pulled out about noon, threaded our way through the various Sydney Harbour ferries, and were soon on course for Brisbane our first port of call. After my experiences in "Wiltshire", "Morinda" was a small ship indeed as I found when we ran into a rough patch of weather that evening. Soon passengers were seasick. I, on the other hand, thoroughly enjoyed the ship's tumbling about. As perhaps might be anticipated I paid a visit to the Wireless office and made the acquaintance of the sole wireless officer.

At Brisbane we tied up at the Pinkenba wharf where we took on a few Queensland passengers, their baggage, and a small quantity of cargo. As we would be at Brisbane but a few hours there was not sufficient time to visit the city but rather did some of us take a stroll ashore. I visited the Brisbane Coastal Radio Station which then was located quite close to the wharf.

From Brisbane we headed north for Cairns, inside the Great Barrier Reef as I had done as far as Townsville in "Wiltshire" a year earlier. Although the war was still proceeding in Europe and although there were men in uniform, ready to go to, or having returned from the seat of war, there was little evidence in "Morinda" that a war was still being fought. There was no black-out in the ship as she proceeded up the Queensland coast and this in itself was relaxing after long periods of travelling in black-outs in the war zones.

As we came abeam of Sandy Cape at the northern extremity of Frazer Island, a steamer to the eastward flying distress signals was sighted from the Bridge. "Morinda" was headed towards the distressed vessel which we soon found was a Japanese cargo steamer. The officers of our ship tried to communicate with the "Ujana Maru" as the Japanese vessel proved to be but could not make themselves understood.

The Second Officer with a boat's crew went over to "Ujana Maru" and discovered that, although she could steam, her rudder post had collapsed as a result of which she could not be steered. She did not carry wireless and had, therefore, been wollowing about in the sea for several days before we sighted her. After quite considerable difficulty a line was secured between the two ships, our ship astern of the other to act as "rudder". We headed for the quieter waters inside Sandy Cape and awaited arrival of a tug from Brisbane that we had summoned by wireless. The towline parted several times before we had the ship in safe waters which occupied the most of two days and a night. I volunteered to assist with either the visual signalling or wireless watchkeeping and my voluntary aid was accepted. In due course, ~~however~~, when salvage of the Japanese steamer was recognised and the Captain, Officers and crew of "Morinda" each shared proportionately to their status in payments, I was but a passenger and received nothing for my labors.

Having handed over the "Ujana Maru" to the tug that duly arrived, we headed again northward, now two days behind schedule. At Cairns we picked up still a few more passengers although, at this stage, all sleeping accommodation was occupied. The newcomers were given settees in the dining saloon upon which to sleep and curtained areas for dressing.

I was perhaps not as impressed with the tropical scenery of Cairns as I might have been if, recently, I had not seen the Cinnamon Gardens of Colombo and the jungle of Sierra Leone. Cairns, ~~however~~, was hot and humid and very different from what I saw and experienced there three years later when I was returning south from Samarai.

The run across the Coral Sea, flat calm and sparkling in the tropical moonlight by night and sunlight by day was quite uneventful. As there was little space for the usual shipboard deck games too much time was spent in eating and sleeping; we soon became very lazy. A very spic and span Customs boat crew and an even more spic and span and white uniformed Customs Officer came aboard at Port Moresby; there was also the usual Port Doctor to ensure that we were not bringing into Papua smallpox or other such dreaded complaints from Australia. Port Moresby, the Administrative capital of Papua, was already a busy little town where most men left manual labor to natives and where most wives left the housework, the laundry and the care of their small children to "houseboys", "laundry boys" and others with similar distinguishing designations. Ten shillings, a bag of rice, a tin or two of preserved meat (known by the natives as bulla-ma-cow) and a stick of "native" tobacco was then considered to be reasonable monthly payment for each boy.

From Port Moresby we skirted the south coast of Papua and arrived at Samarai one early morning. Samarai was really a trading post for plantations on the mainland and outlying islands. Each three weeks, when the steamer from the south was due to arrive with mail, fresh butter and meat, general cargo and passengers, sailing vessels from plantations - Gilli Gilli, Sudea, Doini etc and from Mission Stations at Dobodura, Quato and others, would converge on Samarai, spend a day

or two there unloading copra for shipment south and loading provisions and depart again until next a steamer was expected.

Samarai is quite a small island; within about fifteen minutes it is possible to walk completely round the track that circles the island. The resident population rested at about 70 all told but at steamer time and for a day or two around that event the floating population could grow to a figure around 300. There were three hotels which were depended upon by many of the residents for regular accommodation, three European general stores, a bank, a Post Office, a 6-bed hospital and something of the order of 150 houses. There were native thatched houses and a native gail, a tennis court and a rather inadequately prepared but reasonably safe swimming pool. The means of communication with the outside world was wireless telegraphy and it was for the purpose of operating the Wireless Station that I had been sent to Samarai.

Associated with the Wireless Station was a small self-contained flat - a small kitchen fitted with a wood-burning stove and a "sink", wooden table, and small dresser, and a small bed-sitting room fitted in shipboard fashion with a "bunk". Later during my sojourn at Samarai I moved into the flat and remained there, preparing my meals and caring for myself without the aid of the traditional "chakboy" and "houseboy" and "laundryboy"

Immediately upon my arrival ashore at Samarai I reported to the Officer in Charge of the Wireless Station, who was then the only member of the Staff, and sought advice as to when he expected me to report for duty. The reply to my question was quite definite as: "No time like the present" was his immediate response. I was soon shown how to start the petrol engine that drove the electrical generating equipment and soon introduced to the routine of the job and almost immediately left alone in some bewilderment. In "Wiltshire" I had already experienced a boss that was very retiring by nature but by comparison my new boss could be likened unto a Tibetan Monk. Sometimes three weeks could pass without the exchange of a spoken word between myself and this new boss. Occasionally this tense state of affairs would be broken when the boss would open a conversation, talk for an hour or more then, suddenly and without warning say: "Goodnight" and go again into seclusion. Finally this boss developed serious eye troubles and was evacuated to Sydney for specialist treatment leaving me as my own boss and the sole wireless operator on the island until relief was provided some months later.

I developed a friendship with a storekeeper who owned a sailing lugger and in this little ship, the "Dove", we occasionally visited Milne Bay during Saturday afternoon and returned home Sunday evening. These were extremely pleasant and relaxing short sea voyages and during which it was often possible to obtain a supply of native vegetable - sweet potatoes, taros, yams and the like.

As all residents on the island could normally obtain fresh food only when the 3-weekly steamer from Sydney arrived, I started a small fowl run and soon was able to supply my kitchen and the kitchen of some special friends with fresh eggs and poultry. This was

an interesting and useful hobby. It was particularly interesting as I watched my chickens, so to speak, from the cradle to the grave; I hatched the chickens, tended them, and finally turned some of them into Sunday dinners and, at the same time, added to my popularity with the friends. I played a little tennis; I swam, and I was able to take some interest in local affairs. During one period of my life at Samarai, while the hospital nursing staff was almost non-existent and when a couple of urgent surgical cases were being handled by the local Medical Officer, I was dressed in mask and gown and introduced to the mysteries of a hospital operating theatre. I found these experiences most interesting and somewhat rewarding as, in each incident with which I was associated, there was complete recovery on the part of the patients; I soon recovered too!

During my first year at Samarai I was unhappy and discontented with my isolated lot but, as I was still under R.A.N. discipline (be that discipline as it was in my own hands), I could ~~not~~ but suffer and look for the day when I should be relieved. I was there when the 1914-1918 war armistice was signed and I was on watch when advice of this development came to hand. As had been previously arranged I, upon receiving this advice, immediately went to the local Church and wildly rang the church bell and sparked off a day of great rejoicing on the island.

During my second year on the island, having now collected a number of friends and become more interested in local affairs, I settled down and slowly became a local inhabitant and a piece of the local furniture. The three years I spent at Samarai finally came to an end and when the day came to again join the "Morinda" and steam south it was with considerable regret that I packed my bags, gave my chickens to a ~~friend~~ friend and said my farewells but promising to return someday,

En route to Sydney, as was usual, the ship called at Cairns once again. On this occasion the weather was dull and unseasonal rain was falling. As we were to spend a full day at Cairns arrangements were made to charter a special train for a visit to the Barron Falls. Up, and still further up the hills behind Cairns the train crawled, over many short bridges and through many short tunnels until we reached the falls. Some of us left the train there and explored while the train and the remainder of the passengers went on to Kuranda. This was prior to the hydro electric harnessing of the Barron River and when the falls, after heavy rain, could be seen at their best. We spent a damp but pleasant day on the hills behind Cairns returning to the ship in time for dinner and departure soon thereafter for Brisbane and Sydney with, finally, a passage in the old "Bombala" from Sydney to Melbourne and to home again. Soon after my return to Melbourne the Coastal Radio Service was transferred from R.A.N. control to private enterprise and at this juncture I was discharged from the Navy and once again wore civilian clothes which, after some five years in uniform, I had to purchase. I returned to the Melbourne Coastal Radio Station and took up where I had left off 3 years previously. I did, however, liquidate 94 days leave that had accrued during my Samarai service.

It was at about this time that a Meteorological observing station was established at Willis Island some 300 miles east of Cairns. The station was manned in the first instance by a senior officer of the Department of Navigation and two wireless operators. A couple of wooden huts were established, wireless masts erected and associated equipment installed. The party of three men was then left alone, with provisions, for six months. During the following winter a caretaker and one wireless operator manned the station. Volunteers were then called for to man the station during the next cyclone season - October to March - as no cyclone had been experienced there in the meantime and further tests of living conditions through a cyclone ~~were~~ necessary. I responded to the advertisement and was one of the crew of three finally chosen. We travelled by coastal passenger steamer from Melbourne via Sydney Brisbane and Townsville, once again, to Cairns. At Cairns our small party and 42 cases of provisions were transferred to a small chartered steamer, the "Bopple", and began the trip to Willis Island.

The island known as Willis is really one of three very small islands forming the Willis Group; it is about 450 yards long, about 150 yards wide and of egg shape, and 35 feet above high water. It is almost entirely surrounded by a coral reef; indeed it might be said that Willis Island is a coral island partly above and partly below water level. We were greeted upon arrival, firstly by the winter caretaking crew of two who, naturally, were anxious to receive their first mail for six months and to receive some fresh food. Secondly, we were greeted by thousands of sea birds - masked gannets, brown gannets, sooty terns and noddy terns, and an occasional frigate bird. Some of the birds seemed to be overhead, screeching and calling, continuously. It was hatching time, or would soon be hatching time as a result of which birds were sitting on eggs in crudely made nests or tending new chicks. There were also Mutton birds that riddled the island with burrows in which they lived and reared their young.

During the morning of the day after our arrival at Willis Island we ferried ashore our provisions, saw the "Bopple" depart for the mainland and set about establishing ourselves for the long ~~summer~~ summer. Our provisions had been packed for us in Melbourne so there was some speculation on the contents of the cases. We found, for example, a number of tinned cakes, tinned puddings, and many other items of food in tins. We discovered that if we rationed our cakes and puddings we could have one cake each three weeks and one pudding each fortnight. There ~~were~~ also bags of flour, some yeast, and what appeared to be hundreds of tins of "bully beef". In due course I experimented with, and finally turned out fresh bread twice per week with, on bread-making days, hot rolls for breakfast. Our small supply of fresh food - a bag of potatoes, some greens and butter was soon exhausted or, in most cases, turned "bad" before we could use it.

Our daily job commenced at 6am when weather reports were prepared and transmitted by wireless to the Coastal Radio Station at Cooktown; reports were also sent at 9am, 3pm and 9pm excepting, as

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proved to be the case twice, that hourly reports were despatched during cyclonic conditions.

Having cleared the early morning weather report it was then our custom to take a swim accompanied by the "family" dog and cat. Contrary to popular belief the cat finally overcame a natural objection to water and swam with the party. Meal preparation was attended to on a roster basis, each of the three men taking a week each in turn. The "cook" would cut short his swim and prepare breakfast while the two other men would leisurely prepare for the day's work. This work varied from sweeping and dusting their rooms, through repairs to equipment, to painting the wireless masts. There was also the job of digging and preparing and finally stocking with emergency rations a dugout for use in an emergency should such arise during the passage of a cyclone. Evenings were usually spent, firstly in walking round the island and collecting unusual specimens of coral, watching turtles come ashore to dig a hole in the sand and lay eggs, or resting if a particularly hard working day had preceded that evening. Later there were books to read and, although they would not be posted for many months, letters to write usually in diary form.

Our first cyclone centre passed some distance from the island and caused little inconvenience; it did, however, give us a foretaste of gale force winds and heavy seas. This particular cyclone did, nevertheless, create havoc elsewhere; it amalgamated with another depression that developed in the Coral Sea, passed across Cape York Peninsula and resulted in the loss of a steamer, the "Douglas Mawson" with all hands in the Gulf of Carpentaria. There ~~was~~ ~~some~~ ~~later~~ unconfirmed reports that a lady passenger and her daughter in "Douglas Mawson" had been captured by aborigines but it would appear from later investigation that this was not so.

Two days ahead of our second cyclone a sea swell from the Northeast developed and was accompanied by a falling barometer and, later, an ominous-looking sky. Wind force gradually built up whereupon we took the planned precautions of tying down everything movable, closing and securing wooden shutters on windows and checking our dugout stores and drinking water. Rain fell in sheets. We did not attempt to sleep; indeed there was little time for rest as the hourly weather reports kept us busy. In the "eye" of the cyclone the wind dropped off to an almost flat calm but it soon swung round and began to blow a gale again from the opposite quarter and continued to do so, gradually moderating, as the cyclone moved away from us and followed a parabolic track off the Queensland coast finally dispersing between New Caledonia and New Zealand.

We did not have real cause to use our dugout although, for some hours, we lived there for experience. Overall results achieved did prove within all reasonable possibilities that it was safe for a party to live on Willis Island throughout any cyclone. In due course the Willis Island Meteorological station became a permanent institution and converted from a six months job to a yearly job. Manning of this station is now, normally, on a yearly basis but the unit is periodically visited by a lighthouse tender and is supplied a little more frequently with provisions.

Our term at Willis Island was drawing to a close and glad we were that this should be so. It is noteworthy, however, that on no occasion during our isolation from normal amenities and thrown so closely together as we three men were, never did a fight of any consequence develop. On the rare occasions when tempers ran a little warm, and before the tempers boiled over, we divided ourselves, one man to the northern end of the island, one man to the southern end and one man, usually the rostered cook, at the centre of the island. After an hour or so of this real isolation we were generally ready to carry on with the day's work in harmony. I vividly recall that one of our bitterest arguments surrounded the pronouncation of a word. The word was "horizon"; was it correctly "ho-ri-zon", or was it "horizon"? Which shews how easily, in those circumstances, an upsetting fight could be sparked off.

The "Bopple" that was to bring the winter caretaking party and take us back to civilisation was twice delayed. Once the ship turned back because of unfavorable weather. On the second attempt she was forced to return to Townsville to await from Sydney a replacement for a damaged boiler plate. Eventually the "Bopple" did arrive, unloaded her stores, landed the relief crew and set off, with ourselves aboard, for Townsville. Two days later we were again on the mainland enjoying fresh food and the company of other people. We were soon provided with passages in the coastal steamer ~~"Kynarra"~~ "Kanowna" for the return voyage to Melbourne and to relations and friends once more. We had been absent for almost nine months. After a short leave period I, once again, returned to the Melbourne Coastal Radio Station.

It was at about this time that experiments were being conducted in the Radio Broadcasting field. One of the first, if not actually the first set of experiments in this field were carried out at the Melbourne Coastal Radio Station. One of the first voices transmitted through a broadcasting system in Australia was my own.

Apparently I had shewn some interest in this developing entertainment medium as I was soon chosen as a member of the technical staff to open the broadcasting station then building in Sydney, 2FC. A year later I was returned to Melbourne as one of the technical staff of the new station there, 3LO.

Additional Broadcasting station licences were being issued; one was issued to the Queensland Government whereupon I was offered the opportunity to take charge of the technical work of that station and to take part in its management. Although the offer was quite attractive it was with some misgivings that I tendered my resignation from those who had employed me for some years, and took up my new duties as Chief Engineer of 4QG in Brisbane.

Broadcasting was then still in its infancy. There were many opportunities to shew initiative. In retrospect it seems to me that some of the cornerstones upon which broadcasting rests today were built during the early days of 2FC, 3LO and 4QG.

Callsigns of some of the early Australian broadcasting stations are interesting. Firstly, each State, as now, carried an identifying figure - 2; New South Wales, 3, Victoria; 4, Queensland; 5, South Australia; 6, Western Australia and 7, Tasmania. In the early days of Australian broadcasting the 2-letter suffix of the callsigns generally were afforded some relationship with the owners of the stations; 2FC came from Farmer Company; 2BL came from Broadcasters Limited; and there were; 6WF, West Australian Farmers; 4QG, Queensland Government. 3LO broke adrift from tradition and adopted LO from 2LO London. In later years it became common practice to relate the 2-letter suffixes to places rather than persons as for example

3HA, Hamilton; 2CO, Corowa; 3GL, Geelong; 4AT, Atherton; 4QR, Queensland Region. Some stations, of course, carry callsigns allotted in sequence without reference to person or place as for example 2NZ, Inverell; 4ZR, Roma, etc.

Broadcasting, in those early days, lent itself to novelties that in later years became commonplace. The type of "portable" pickup equipment used in theatres and other places of entertainment, and at Shows and the like was not really portable; it was barely transportable. A feature of early broadcasting from 2FC in Sydney was the taking of excerpts and occasionally full acts from the old and now non-existent Her Majesty's Theatre. On the mornings prior to the evenings of such broadcasts it was necessary to hire a lorry, load it with cases of equipment weighing possibly a quarter of a ton, transport the cases to space under Her Majesty's stage, connect up the equipment, run microphone leads to selected locations in the theatre and test the completed job by voice transmissions to the Studio over hired telephone lines; Having done all this, it was necessary to return to the Theatre to position the microphone before patrons arrived and then, if the portion of the program to be broadcast was near the end of the performance, to wait throughout the program with nothing to do but watch the show. ~~XXXXXX~~ I saw such as "The Merry Widow", and others of similar type a dozen or more times each.

"Stunt" broadcasting as it was then known was also popular. We broadcast the voice of a diver from the muddy bottom of the Brisbane River; there was the description of Brisbane that was broadcast from the top of the wireless mast of 4QG that, in those days, stood some 250 feet above George Street Brisbane and atop the old State Insurance Building; and there was the re-broadcasting of wireless signals received from the aircraft "Southern Cross" as she winged her way on the first flight across the Pacific Ocean and when on one occasion the signals said "We might be able to make it to Suva but yet doubtful". Church services, musical festivals, eisteddfods and the like, now taken for granted in broadcasting programs, were then real novelties. ~~and~~ Their successful broadcast called for quite considerable ingenuity on the part of the technical people involved, much planning, and often long weary hours of waiting.

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Associated with early broadcasting days there is also the memory of the "sealed set". Broadcast reception was allowed only from selected stations and to this end all receivers sold to the public were "sealed" on prescribed radio frequencies. This was a most unpopular innovation and was soon dropped in favor of the type of broadcast receivers now generally in use throughout Australia.

The quality of broadcast transmission and reception has improved throughout the development of this art; portable, mostly "transistorised", receivers are in truth portable; VHF and UHF links have to a large extent superseded hired line connections, and recorders have provided a means of "bottling" programs for later broadcast. But the "mystery" of broadcasting; the great achievement associated with the broadcast of such as the 3rd Act of the Merry Widow is now all taken as a part of life. Pioneers in this as in other fields are forgotten and overshadowed by such as T.V. and evolution.

It was during my period of service at 4QG that I generated an interest in flying which was then in its growing infancy in Australia. I took a trial flight in a training aircraft at what was then a "pocket handkerchief" and little more than a "cow-paddock" aerodrome at Eagle Farm, Brisbane. The Instructor of the Brisbane Flying School was ~~Charles~~ the late Charles (C.W.A.) Scott who, with the late Campbell-Black later won the London to Melbourne Centenary Air Race. The Manager was Lester Brain who later, among many other things, became the first General Manager of Trans Australia Airlines. It was Brain who first introduced me to the art of flying. I found the experience most exhilarating particularly when the aircraft was put into steep turns. I shall probably long remember my first flight when I looked down upon the winding Brisbane River, the steamers at the wharves, a dredge at work and the matchbox houses.

I signed up for Private Pilot training and, within a few days, commenced my training with Charles Scott. One of the first details passed to me by Scott was that, should the aircraft engine stop, I was to "Push the stick forward". Soon after taking off and gaining some height Scott, without advising me, pulled the throttle back and, of course, slowed down the engine to the extent that I imagined it was stopping. Without hesitation, and recalling the instructions given to me to "Push the stick forward", I did just that. If I had been told to "Ease the stick forward" all would have been well; As it was I took the instruction literally with the result that both Scott and myself were almost thrown out of the aircraft at least to the full extent of our safety belt, and we almost went into an outside loop. I think Scott learned something from this experience; certainly I did.

In due course I passed my tests and examinations as prescribed and became the proud possessor of a Private Pilots (then known as an "A") licence. Later still I was authorised to carry a passenger,

This milestone in my life was celebrated by joining a flying picnic party of three aircraft, each with a passenger in a DH60, to Yellow Patch on Moreton Island a few miles from Brisbane. All proceeded to plan until we were airborne on the way home. As soon as we gained sufficient height to see the distance towards our home port it was obvious that there was heavy rain ahead. Our three aircraft were supposed to return to Brisbane in formation but this proved impossible. We soon ran into heavy rain and some turbulence and saw, not far away, flashes of lightning. By standards later learned I was ill-equipped to handle the situation that had so unexpectedly developed. I had sense enough, however, to realise that if I were to become a commercial pilot, and in any event as there was nobody to whom I could turn for advice, I had to get out of the situation by my own efforts. I realised in time to benefit from the realisation that the storm was relatively localised and that, a few miles off track, there was a thinning of the storm. I turned towards what appeared to me to be a better flying area and as it proved to be, and came in to land behind the main part of the storm but still in relatively heavy rain. Luck held; I effected quite a good landing but almost immediately bogged in a soft patch. I and my passenger finally reached the parking area to find that the other two aircraft had already landed although one had been damaged in doing so. I learned from that experience too.

One evening as I sat at dinner I received a telephone call from Lester Brain who was also Brisbane Manager for QANTAS. The aircraft "Southern Cross", flown by Kingsford Smith and a crew of three en-route from Sydney to London on an experimental mail flight had disappeared in northwestern Western Australia. Seeking these lost fliers Keith Anderson, and Bob Hitchcock as Mechanic had themselves disappeared somewhere in central Australia believed to be northwest of Alice Springs. A QANTAS aircraft had now been chartered to search for Anderson and Hitchcock. I was asked if I could fit radio equipment to the QANTAS aircraft.

Radio in aircraft at that time was very rare; I knew very little about aircraft and nothing about radio in aircraft. I did have, however, a set of equipment with which I experimented at home and which I thought might serve a reasonable purpose. With some assistance I dismantled my rig at home, transported it to Eagle Farm and began the task of installing it in the chartered aircraft in such a manner that, as far as I could estimate - or more correctly "guesstimate" - would not interfere with the working of the aircraft itself, would allow space for an operator, the flight engineer and necessary emergency rations, spare tyre, extra fuel tank and a small amount of luggage but at the same time be in a reasonably workable position. It was with real satisfaction, about 2am next morning after awakening a friend at his home, to get a report from him that he could hear my test signals.

It was not until now that any real thought, excepting by Brain, had been given to the identity of the operator that should accompany the expedition. When this was mentioned to Brain he seemed to have

already concluded that I should be his wireless operator. Within a space of four hours I had been home and made my plans known, selected a few items of clothing that I might need and essential other small items, and a small camera, returned to the aerodrome and was airborne for parts, to me, unknown.

We landed at Tambo in southwestern Queensland to refuel. It was here that, with great disappointment, I received a telegram from Brisbane announcing that soon after leaving Brisbane my signals had not been received. I checked my gear which was of very rudimentary design and was elated when I discovered that a wire had broken adrift, possibly by aircraft vibration, and this had put the set completely out of action but which, because of the lack of suitable instruments in the transmitter, could not be detected during flight. Having repaired the small but vital damage to the transmitter we set out for Longreach and upon arrival there I was advised that my signals were now being received quite satisfactorily. We night-stopped at Longreach and again the following night at the Brunette Downs homestead in the Northern Territory. On the morning of the third day out of Brisbane we moved from Brunette Downs and arrived at Newcastle Waters in time for a goat and damper breakfast. It was our intention then to proceed to Wave Hill, establish a base, and commence our search; Brian had a sound "hunch" that the missing aircraft would be within reasonable flying distance from Wave Hill.

As we now proceeded in what would later be known as the "probability area" we each kept an intensive lookout. In the type of aircraft used by us, a DH50, passengers were seated in a small canopy covered cabin while the pilot occupied a conventional outside seat and with visibility much better than was possible in the cabin. It was not unexpected, therefore, that when we reached a point some 50 miles on track towards Wave Hill, Brian passed through a written note announcing that he had sighted smoke away to the south of track and that he was altering course to investigate. This information was immediately set out by wireless.

Approaching the smoke it could be seen that a patch of scrub and grass was blackened over ~~some~~ an area of some 200 ~~square miles~~ square miles on one edge of which, reflecting the sun, was an object that at our distance resembled a jam tin, but which as we came nearer took on the shape and size of a small aeroplane. The missing aeroplane "Kookaburra" registration letters G-AUKA, had been found. There was a body under a wing; no other person or body could be found in our search from the air. I passed this information to the wireless station at Wave Hill that had set up a special watch for me and soon we were proceeding there. A land party set out next day and found that tragedy had overcome the fliers; both had died of thirst after a forced landing due to engine trouble.

After a rest for a day we retraced our steps but called at Sydney en route where some photographs that I had taken while over the wreck were published, with some compensation to me, in a Sydney newspaper. My experience of aeroplanes was building up.

Continued.